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Chairperson: Mr. Penke ..... (Latvia)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.00 p.m.

Agenda item 65: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*) (A/64/315)

(a) Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*) (A/64/172, A/64/182-E/2009/110 and A/64/254)

(b) Follow-up to the special session on children (*continued*) (A/64/285)

1. **Ms. Ivanović** (Serbia) said that her Government had adopted a national action plan on children for the years 2004-2015. Its main goals were reducing poverty, providing quality education and health care, improving the status of children with disabilities and protecting children from abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence. The plan had also led to the adoption in 2005 and 2008 of two protocols governing different aspects of child protection from abuse and neglect. Serbia was working tirelessly to establish a comprehensive national system for the protection and promotion of children's rights in compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In that connection, a number of Government bodies had been created, among them the Council on the Rights of the Child, which promoted children's participation in devising and implementing policies on their rights.

2. While there was a solid legal and institutional framework for the protection and promotion of children's rights in Serbia, much remained to be done, particularly with regard to children with disabilities, children lacking parental care and Roma children. To that end, her Government would continue to work closely with civil society, the private sector and international organizations to improve the situation of all children at the national level.

3. **Ms. Zahir** (Maldives) said that, while her Government was committed to promoting and protecting child welfare, it was currently grappling with a number of challenges, among them the rising number of children using illicit narcotics. The welfare of children born to substance-abusing parents was another matter of concern, particularly given the absence of an institutional foster care system. That gap could be filled by civil society groups but for the fact that local NGOs lacked trained professionals, a difficulty further compounded by severe resource constraints, which hindered civil society outreach and awareness activities. In order to address these problems and fulfil its obligations under the Convention, the Maldives was establishing a childcare system that would institutionalize child welfare at the national level.

4. Her country had recently witnessed an alarming increase in the number of reported cases of abuse and violence against children, including sexual violence and exploitation. Tougher sentencing guidelines for child sex-offenders had been introduced early the previous year. The fundamental right to both primary and secondary education was guaranteed by the Constitution of the Maldives. However, the rising number of girls prevented from attending school in some island communities was indicative of a worrisome trend towards extremism that posed a particular threat to the rights of the girl child. Furthermore, the lack of empirical data on child protection issues within the existing, limited child protection system made it difficult to assess the extent of children's vulnerability in the Maldives.

5. Faced with severe budgetary constraints as a result of the global financial crisis, her Government was forced to restrict all public expenses until the global economy picked up. In the meantime, the Maldives was working to reinforce the international legal regime by adopting legislation that contained child-related policies aimed at achieving standards in that area.

6. **Mr. Koterec** (Slovakia) said that giving voice to children would require the international community to pay closer attention to the aspirations and needs that children voiced. In that connection, Slovakia had introduced a Human Rights Council resolution, on behalf of almost 50 countries, on an Open-ended Working Group on an optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child to provide a communications procedure complementary to the reporting procedure under the Convention. As the resolution had been adopted by the Council, the Working Group would meet in Geneva in December 2009 to explore the possibility of elaborating the optional protocol.

7. **Ms. Dali** (Tunisia) said that her Government had taken a number of practical measures aimed at protecting the rights of all children regardless of gender, such as the development of a second national plan on childhood for the years 2002-2010; the creation of a centre for information, training,

documentation and study relating to the protection of the rights of the child; and the establishment of a child parliament, which served as a space for children to learn democratic values. Moreover, 2008 had been declared national year of dialogue with young people, affirming the importance of listening to children and encouraging them to express their views.

8. Tunisia paid particular attention to the situation of children at risk; to that end, it had established centres in which, through the coordinated efforts of the Government, public institutions and civil society, children at risk were cared for and supported. Furthermore, the Government had designated child protection officers to intervene on behalf of children in difficult situations. In 2008 over 1,000 children at risk had been given shelter.

9. **Mr. Pak** Tok Hun (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that 20 years after the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, despite international efforts, children continued to fall prey to exploitation, abuse, hunger and poverty. Member States must take practical action to remedy the plight of children in such situations and to promote their rights and welfare. International cooperation was also necessary, but attempts to politicize such cooperation should not be allowed. Furthermore, developed countries should fulfil their aid commitments to the developing world so as to support the latter's efforts to attain the child-related targets set forth in the Millennium Development Goals and in the "World Fit for Children" document.

10. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea had always considered children and their welfare to be of the utmost importance, as the cornerstone of the country's future. It had taken concrete steps toward promoting and protecting the rights of children, namely, through legal guarantees of those rights, provision of universal compulsory free education and free medical care. His Government had submitted its combined third and fourth periodic report on the implementation of the Convention for review by the Committee on the Rights of the Child earlier that year.

11. **Ms. Buheji** (Bahrain) said that the Bahraini Constitution and the National Charter accorded special attention and protection to the family unit, as the basis of society, as well as specific protection of children from exploitation, and ethical, physical or psychological negligence. Her country had acceded to a number of international conventions on children's rights, chief among them the Convention on the Rights of the Child and International Labour Organization conventions on child labour. In implementation of those conventions, Bahrain had taken a number of practical steps, including the creation of a national commission on childhood that aimed to improve children's living standards.

12. Her Government was working to coordinate and unify the efforts of all Government institutions dealing with children's issues, in addition to supporting the activities of civil society and voluntary organizations working in the same area. With regard to child protection, Bahrain had conducted a review of child-related laws in order to arrive at a set of appropriate recommendations that would consolidate the gains made in that field. Furthermore, the Ministry of Development had established a centre for child protection, among other such institutions. Advanced educational technologies had been used to develop and update educational curricula and teaching methods. Community organizations had also assumed a role in educating children, particularly where their rights were concerned, through television programmes aimed at alerting children to potential abuse.

13. **Ms. Polo** (Togo) said that her Government was committed to providing children with the material conditions, moral and social guidance and legal framework that they needed in order to thrive. In that connection, a number of legislative and regulatory measures had been taken, including a ban on female genital mutilation and amendments to the child code that set the legal marriage age for both sexes at 18 and guaranteed a child's right to inheritance regardless of gender.

14. Her Government was working at all levels to combat child trafficking in Togo and in the subregion by organizing national conferences on the subject and workshops on a child trafficking database. Moreover, with the technical and financial support of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the Ministry of Child Protection had launched an awareness-raising campaign that targeted cinema audiences across the country, particularly those in areas with a high incidence of child trafficking. In order to provide assistance to child victims of violence and to prevent potential cases of violence against children from occurring, her Government had set up a toll-free and anonymous child protection telephone line.

15. In line with article 28 of the Convention and article 35 of the Togolese Constitution, primary education was free of charge as of the 2008-2009 academic year. Other education reform measures envisaged included teacher recruitment and training and school feeding programmes. The Togolese Child Code stipulated that actions or decisions concerning children must take into account all factors that might affect their mental, moral, physical or material well-being. The Code established the conditions and procedure of the adoption process, in which, as in all other matters concerning children, protecting the best interests of the child was the governing principle. Her country hoped to receive additional international support for its efforts to educate the population on the Convention through the mass media, traditional channels of information, pamphlets and training workshops.

16. **Mr. Bhattarai** (Nepal) said that the Interim Constitution of Nepal guaranteed the rights of children, as did several domestic laws and policies, some of which contained provisions against child labour and child trafficking. Furthermore, the National Action Plan on education aimed to expand and improve comprehensive early childhood care and education in order to ensure that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, had access to free, compulsory, quality primary education. A number of child welfare programmes addressed the needs of street and at-risk children, among others.

17. Despite various challenges, Nepal had introduced free maternity services and free basic health care for women and children. The country had halved child and maternal mortality rates over the previous decade and was on course to meet the relevant Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Acting on its commitment to protect the rights of all children, including those affected by armed conflict, his Government was implementing the recommendations of the Working Group of the Security Council on Children and Armed Conflict and had developed rehabilitation and reintegration programmes for underage combatants in consultation with the United Nations system. Additional international financial and technical assistance should be provided to developing countries, especially the least developed and those emerging from conflicts, in order to enable them to improve the quality of education, health and other services.

18. **Ms. Cerere** (Kenya) said that in Kenya, the biting drought was causing untold suffering to children and other vulnerable populations. Manmade and natural emergencies must be addressed, lest they undermine development targets. The tireless efforts exerted by the Government, its development partners, civil society and the private sector were beginning to make inroads in the struggle against diseases such as malaria and upper respiratory infections. However, those efforts were largely hampered by the flight of medical personnel, inadequate medical facilities and the high cost of medical equipment and commodities.

19. The Government's comprehensive health policy framework provided health services to children and adults alike, and the coverage provided exceeded the relevant standards set by the World Health Organization (WHO). In addition, the community health initiative aimed to address interrelated problems affecting maternal and child health. In order to properly address the problems faced by children, it was imperative to deal with the challenges faced by parents, particularly those arising from the financial and food crises. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) relating to children would not be achieved if those concerning their parents were not met. Furthermore, it was important to instil a culture of tolerance and peaceful conflict resolution in children; in that regard, her country supported the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

20. The greatest stride made by Kenya in promoting children's rights was in the area of education. School enrolment had expanded exponentially, and retention was high, particularly since the introduction of tuition-free secondary school education, putting Kenya on course to achieve MDG 2 by 2015. She thanked the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for their continued support of Universal Primary Education (UPE) and the school feeding programme.

21. Her Government supported the appointment of the Special Representative on Violence against Children. Its own efforts in that area included the creation of a 24-hour toll-free hotline to report violations of children's rights, the adoption of a comprehensive policy aimed at protecting children from all forms of violence, the provision of free

counselling services for child victims of abuse, and passage of the Sexual Offences Act.

22. **Mr. Hermida Castillo** (Nicaragua) said that his Government's comprehensive policy on childhood and adolescence was being implemented through the Amor Programme, which brought together various sectors of Government and community organizations and was financed by the International Development Bank (IDB) and United Nations specialized agencies. Targeting the poorest areas of the country, activities and measures undertaken under the Programme included the establishment of a network of childcare, health and nutrition services in rural areas; restoration of the rights of at-risk children, including the rights to education, to family care and to a name; and the provision of protection to the children of migrant workers and persons deprived of liberty.

23. The Government was also working to eradicate child labour through the adoption of a protocol on its worst forms and to improve the juvenile justice system and prison conditions. The first and most important step towards creating a world fit for children was ensuring that their basic needs were met. In that connection, his country expressed appreciation for the donor community's continued support of its development programmes.

24. **Mr. Ganemtore** (Burkina Faso) said that his country attached great importance to protecting and promoting the rights of children, who made up over half of the population. Despite efforts made to promote child rights and welfare, major challenges remained, as nearly half of the children of Burkina Faso lived in poverty, a situation exacerbated by the recent floods that had swept the country. Furthermore, child and infant mortality remained high, school enrolment of girls lagged behind that of boys, and over a third of school-age children did not have access to education.

25. In order to address those challenges, a strategic framework for the promotion of child welfare had been adopted for the years 2008-2017. Under the framework, a national council for child survival, protection and development had been established, and a Government initiative aimed to expand access to and improve the quality of formal and informal education. In addition, a child parliament had been established to enable children to have their say on measures taken on their behalf.

26. **Mr. Garayev** (Azerbaijan) said that his country had made significant progress towards reducing infant and child mortality, as demonstrated by the results of a recent survey conducted with the support of UNICEF. The Government was also taking steps to address the situation of children living without parental care, its main aims being deinstitutionalization and returning children back to their families.

27. Despite its achievements in promoting the rights and welfare of children, his Government continued to face challenges, chief among them the protracted conflict with Armenia, which had occupied almost one-fifth of Azerbaijani territory. As a result, Azerbaijan had one of the highest proportions of refugees and displaced persons in the world, large numbers of whom were children. Many children had grown up in camps or crowded temporary accommodations.

28. While the Government had made major efforts to solve the housing problems, the conflict remained an obstacle. Children had not been spared from the serious offences committed during the conflict, and they had even been targeted in some cases, as had happened one night in February 1992 when the town of Khojaly in the Nagorny Karabakh region of Azerbaijan had been captured by invading Armenian forces. More than 60 children had been intentionally killed, and dozens had been maimed and taken hostage. Furthermore, of more than 4,200 people reported missing in connection with the conflict, 47 were children.

29. With regard to violence against children, he expressed concern at the continued use of the death penalty for crimes committed before the age of 18, which was clearly in breach of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In addition, it was essential for all States parties to withdraw their reservations to the Convention and its Protocols in order to facilitate its full implementation. Lastly, Azerbaijan stood ready to honour its commitments to advance the implementation of children's rights and significantly increase investments in and for children.

30. **Mr. Limeres** (Argentina) said that his country, in its national policy on children, sought to avoid overlapping efforts and duplication of structures and establishment of untimely objectives. The Convention on the Rights of the Child and the relevant national legislation established a model for action that took into account the fact that children and adolescents, in view of the special phase of their development, had rights in

addition to those possessed by all adults. Their opinion should be taken into account in all decision-making that affected them and should be a guiding pillar for public, State or private action in the promotion and protection of their rights. Children and their families should participate in the efforts of government entities and non-governmental organizations to ensure the enjoyment of their rights. In terms of resources, Argentina had increased its investment in children by over 30 per cent as a percentage of GDP over the period 1995-2009.

31. The development and implementation of effective multidisciplinary policies required a concerted effort by the national Government, the judiciary, Parliament and civil society, including trade unions, the private sector and civil society organizations. International cooperation, including South-South cooperation was an important tool to support national efforts to achieve the goals set out in the "World Fit for Children" document and the Millennium Development Goals. Argentina had signed an agreement with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and was working on various cooperation projects. His country had also received technical assistance and cooperation from a number of international organizations.

32. His Government, together with civil society, was fighting against impunity and for the eradication of enforced disappearances. Intense efforts had been made to return children to their families, and over a hundred children had already been located. Argentina was deeply committed to the implementation of the principles and objectives of the "World Fit for Children" document. Its national policy was based on the first of those principles: "Put children first".

33. **Ms. Al-Raqadi** (Oman) said that her country had made significant gains in promoting the rights and welfare of Omani children. Oman had ratified a number of international instruments that protected the rights of children, chief among them the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. Furthermore, national laws guaranteed equality among all citizens in terms of their rights and responsibilities, as well as the right to citizenship for children born of unknown fathers.

34. A national commission for the protection of childhood had been established to follow up on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In addition, the Ministry of Social Development had set up national working groups throughout the Sultanate to investigate cases of child abuse in all its forms and extend assistance and protection to child victims of abuse. The infant mortality rate had decreased significantly in Oman and had been ranked 138th in the world in 2008. Malnutrition remained a major challenge, and the Ministry of Health was actively collaborating with other Government ministries and UNICEF to address the problem.

35. **Ms. Rusaro** (Rwanda), speaking as her country's youth delegate, said Rwanda still bore the burden of the effects of the 1994 genocide, which had radically altered its demographic composition. Widows, orphans and neglected minors accounted for a significant percentage of the population, and victims of genocide were living side by side with the perpetrators. The number of street children in urban centres had increased, while in rural areas many children were heads of households working to support their siblings. Rwanda had over 101,000 households headed by children, three-quarters of them girls. In recent years, economic, social and political transformations had taken place. Children were actively contributing to the efforts to ensure a brighter future and her country's experience offered a beacon of hope to all.

36. **Ms. Sulimani** (Sierra Leone) said that her country had a greater obligation to promote and protect the rights of children as a result of the decade-long brutal rebel war. Even before ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, Sierra Leone had made sure that the children involved in the war had been successfully demobilized and reintegrated into their communities.

37. Sierra Leone was committed to ratifying the International Labour Organization Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour and already had laws prohibiting night employment for children below the age of 18 years and employment in underground mines for children below the age of 16 years. There were also punitive measures for parents whose children were found on the streets during school hours. There was a national plan of action to address the major areas of the "World Fit for Children" document. Great progress had been made in the area of health, with a significant increase in immunization coverage, while in education, the number of primary schools had been increased, with net enrolment of 69 per cent.

38. The Special Court for Sierra Leone had reached a landmark verdict in April 2009 in the cases of individuals who had recruited children under the age of 15 years to participate in hostilities. A national children's rights act had been passed and a national Commission for Human Rights established. The issue of female genital mutilation was now discussed openly, which was a milestone in Sierra Leone's history. A number of groups were advocating termination of such practices and a nationwide sensitization campaign was under way. With international assistance and cooperation, Sierra Leone had managed to bring about a marked improvement in the protection and promotion of the rights of the child. Her Government would appreciate the continued and sustained assistance of the United Nations and other international actors.

39. **Mr. Samarasinghe** (Sri Lanka) said that consistent investment in free education and policies conducive to universal access to education from the primary to university levels had resulted in a national literacy rate of 93 per cent. Sri Lanka was on track for reaching the target of universal primary education, as well as for ensuring school gender parity and providing reproductive health services. There had been a sustained decline in child and maternal mortality rates. Child immunization was already universal, and the free public health system had improved child health.

40. Sri Lanka was committed to ensuring the rights of children with disabilities and a comprehensive law was being drafted to ensure full compliance with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The Children and Young Persons Ordinance imposed heavy penalties for exploitation of children, and the Penal Code had been amended to increase the penalties for sexual exploitation of children. There was strict legislation on the rights of adopted children, and Sri Lanka was a party to the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Inter-country Adoptions. The National Child Protection Authority led efforts to prevent child abuse, prosecute offenders, foster awareness of children's rights, provide advice to the Government and assist victims of abuse. The laws against child trafficking were in line with the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

41. With the end of the armed conflict in Sri Lanka, the abhorrent practice of using innocent children in armed combat had come to an end. Former child combatants were undergoing comprehensive rehabilitation and integration at special centres set up with the assistance of UNICEF and ILO. They were treated as victims and not as detainees. Parents could now bring up their children in a secure environment. The reunification and resettlement of displaced families was continuing. Teams from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and UNICEF visited the villages of internally displaced children, who continued to attend classes and take examinations.

42. **Mr. Tachie-Menson** (Ghana) said that Ghana had extensively amended its legislation against violence, exploitation and abuse of children, including the Children's Act, the Juvenile Justice Act, the Domestic Violence Act, the Human Trafficking Act and the Persons with Disability Act. New policies had been introduced to advance the protection of children, including the Early Childhood Care and Development Policy, the Gender and Children Policy and the Draft Street Children in Ghana Policy Framework. The major problem was lack of effective implementation, poor capacity of institutions, resource constraints, the existence of inhibitive sociocultural practices and data gaps.

43. Greater collaboration between the United Nations bodies and the World Bank was needed to increase action to achieve the Millennium Development Goals relating to health and education. The United Nations and Member States should strengthen advocacy to address all forms of violence against children. The provision of technical and financial resources was of paramount importance in that regard.

44. **Mr. Giorgio** (Eritrea) said that his country, as a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols, had strengthened its coordination and monitoring mechanism by establishing an integrated early childhood development programme to enhance their implementation. The Government's long-standing policy had been to reduce poverty through rapid economic growth and accelerated human development. The food security strategy addressed the nutritional needs of children, and therapeutic feeding centres had been established at hospitals and health centres. Eritrea was on track to achieving the Millennium Development Goal 4: reducing child mortality.

45. The programme for integrated management of childhood illnesses had brought health improvements. Immunization and nutrition programmes and the distribution of insecticide-treated bed nets had reduced mortality rates over the past few years. Free education had contributed to the expansion of educational opportunities for vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, including disabled children. The Government was also working to narrow the gender gap in education.

46. Other initiatives included a national action plan to implement the ban on female genital mutilation and a plan of action to combat the commercial exploitation of children. Orphans were being reintegrated with their extended families or in group homes in order to reduce the number of children cared for in institutions. Lastly, Eritrea had endorsed the Paris Commitments to protect children from unlawful recruitment or use by armed forces or armed groups.

47. **Ms. Nawaz** (Pakistan) said that efforts to improve basic health and education services, the reduction of maternal and child mortality and global partnerships should remain the priorities for the well-being of children for the next decade. Pakistan placed great emphasis on fulfilling its international human rights commitments and had recently presented its combined third and fourth periodic report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child in Geneva.

48. A child protection bill prepared in consultation with all stakeholders would soon be presented to the National Assembly. It defined and criminalized child pornography and child sexual abuse and increased the penalties for offences against children. A Child Complaint Cell had been set up at the federal level to redress children's grievances. A child protection management information system had been established with support from UNICEF and covered the areas of child sexual exploitation, juvenile justice, child trafficking, family and alternative care, and violence against children. A social protection scheme provided coverage for children with multiple or severe disabilities, who would receive a monthly stipend to cover their basic needs.

49. **Mr. El Mkhantar** (Morocco) said that, as part of a cooperation programme with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Morocco was organizing continuing education and training courses abroad for judges and juvenile judges, in order to familiarize them with international norms relating to children's rights and juvenile justice. Morocco had established an annual literacy strategy with the goal of reducing the illiteracy rate to 20 per cent by the year 2010. Illiteracy should be eliminated by 2015, and education should be provided for all children by 2010.

50. In July 2009, Morocco had hosted an international seminar on human rights education and training. The seminar had served to renew the international consensus on the importance of a United Nations declaration on that subject. Lastly, she stressed that the task of protecting the rights of children required the full support of the international community and a sustained commitment by the United Nations to provide technical assistance.

51. **Ms. Filip** (Observer for the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)) said that, in 2008, the Union and the Countdown to 2015 Conference on Maternal, Newborn and Child Survival had joined forces to promote maternal, newborn and child health in 68 countries. IPU was continuing to support parliaments in actions in that area. Another challenge for parliaments was how to ensure adequate representation of children. In the current year, IPU had focused its attention on Latin America and initiatives to address violence against children in that region, as child protection legislation in many countries was inadequate.

52. Statistics showed that each year, 40 million children in Latin America and the Caribbean suffered severe abuse. IPU and UNICEF had supported a regional seminar held in San José, Costa Rica, in August 2009 to address that issue. Delegates had examined legislative frameworks and discussed the allocation and oversight of resources for child protection, with particular attention to ensuring the participation of children and adolescents in parliamentary processes.

53. **Mr. von Flüe** (Observer for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)) said that ICRC placed considerable emphasis on the theme of children affected by armed conflict and other situations of violence. Detained children were a vulnerable group that was not given sufficient attention. In 2008 alone, ICRC had visited over 1,500 detained children in countries affected by conflict or other situations of violence across the globe. The participation of children in hostilities was often accompanied by an increase in the numbers of detained children. Children as young as

nine years were accused of being insurgents or terrorists. Other children accompanied their parents in prison or had been imprisoned only as a means of taking them off the streets. Detention conditions almost always became worse in situations of armed conflict.

54. Detained children were vulnerable, deprived of family protection and an education, and sometimes used as cheap labour. ICRC was in constant dialogue with the detaining authorities, assisting them, if necessary, to improve the detention conditions of prisoners in general and of children and other vulnerable persons in particular. Assistance was also provided for detainees to maintain contact with their families.

55. Children should be detained only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest possible period of time; they were entitled to specific care and protection, including the right to communicate with their parents. They should be held in detention separately from adults; and they had the right to challenge the legality of their detention. Lastly, capital punishment was prohibited under both international humanitarian law and human rights law for offences committed by persons under 18 years of age. The Convention on the Rights of the Child also prohibited the sentencing of children to life imprisonment.

56. **Mr. Kooijmans** (Observer for the International Labour Organization (ILO)) said that the Committee's discussion in the previous year had resulted in the adoption of General Assembly resolution 63/241 on the rights of the child, which focused on child labour. That had reinforced existing International Labour Organization (ILO) instruments and given a new impulse to the efforts to eradicate child labour.

57. The two main ILO standards on child labour had been widely ratified. The Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (No. 182) had been ratified by 171 States and the Minimum Age Convention (No. 138) by 154 States. The Government of the Netherlands, in cooperation with ILO, was convening a Global Conference on Child Labour in May 2010, which would focus on integrating the elimination of child labour into global education, development and human rights frameworks and was expected to adopt a road map to achieve the goal of eliminating the worst forms of child labour by 2016.

58. The economic crisis could lead to more children entering the workforce, and policy responses should ensure that core services were delivered to vulnerable households, with social and educational services provided to the most vulnerable. ILO invited Member States to endorse the conclusions and recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report on the status of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (A/64/172) and to work with agencies such as ILO and UNICEF to shape their national responses to child labour.

59. **Mr. Lindal** (Observer for the Sovereign Military Order of Malta) said that the Order would continue to make the inclusion of girl children in their health and education programmes a requirement and supported the work of United Nations agencies focusing on the girl child. The Order also supported all measures to eliminate the killing of children and other civilians in situations of conflict and the conscription of child soldiers and hoped that the Security Council would address those specific areas in its debate on the protection of civilians.

60. Since over 15,000 newborns were born in the facilities of the Order every year, it was acutely aware of the provisions needed for health systems to remain effective. The designation of 2008 as the International Year of Sanitation had indicated the need to improve sanitation facilities and hygiene education programmes worldwide. The Order's work in that area relied on the continued support of United Nations agencies and Member States. The Order remained committed to responding to the challenges confronting children in the realization of their most fundamental rights.

61. **Mr. Davide** (Philippines) said that his Government's national strategic plan for children's development, the Child 21 Plan, set out a road map to build a child-sensitive and child-friendly society in the twenty-first century. The national plan was consistent with the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the "World Fit for Children" Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals.

62. In the past six years, the Philippines had enacted a number of laws to strengthen its child protection legislation, including the Anti-Trafficking in Persons, particularly Women and Children, Act and the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor Law. Amendments had been made to the Family Code and the Magna Carta for Persons with Disabilities. Bills against torture, including of children, and child pornography were pending in Congress.

63. The National Statistics Office was implementing the Unregistered Children Project to close the gap in registered births. The Plan of Action for Nutrition had increased its focus on children and other nutritional programmes were also geared to addressing children's needs. Those efforts had resulted in a decline in infant mortality. The Government was also working with international development partners to expand the number of public schools, classrooms and laboratories for school children.

64. The national Plan of Action to End Violence Against Children had led to the establishment of women's and children's units within the Philippine National Police. A children's defence fund had also been created. The Government was resolute in its efforts to protect children in the context of peace processes in the country. It had recently presented its combined third and fourth periodic report on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The UNICEF country programme in the Philippines, originally scheduled to finish in December 2009, had just been extended for another two years.

65. **Ms. Romulus** (Haiti) said that the Inter-American Development Bank had financed a pilot project for research on gender stereotypes in Haitian school textbooks. The results had shown a greater number of male figures, both in text and in images, and few images showing men and women together. Men were depicted at work and women at the market, boys in the street and girls at home. The books reproduced the gender stereotypes that existed in Haiti but were no longer appropriate for contemporary society. Education for children contributed to rebuilding society, and the Ministry of Education had received recommendations for a review of school textbooks. Future publications would be more balanced, depicting women in a broader range of professional activities.

66. Haiti had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention. The State no longer authorized children's employment in domestic service, although the practice still continued illegally. The true solution was to reduce the extreme poverty that led to that situation.

67. **Mr. Ould Ghadi** (Mauritania) said that a number of Government programmes aimed at promoting citizens' health and education as well as combating ignorance had had a positive impact on the situation of the rights of children. The Ministry for Women's Promotion, Childhood and the Family was elaborating and implementing child-related policies, in addition to training child protection officers and early education staff. In support of the Ministry's activities, a national council on childhood was created, along with a national commission against sexual violence, including female genital mutilation, which was criminalized under Mauritanian law.

68. Mauritania had adopted a personal status law that banned early marriage and made education compulsory for children aged 6 to 14 years, as well as a revised law on child labour. In implementation of domestic legislation and of the numerous human rights conventions to which it was a Party, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child, his Government had taken punitive measures against child trafficking, early marriage, child labour, and sexual assault and exploitation of children.

Statements made in exercise of the right of reply

69. **Ms. Shanidze** (Georgia) said that the Russian Federation's statement made in exercise of the right of reply on the previous day had been consistent with Moscow's position of denying responsibility for the tragic events of the conflict. The Russian Federation had tried to corrupt the content of the report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia, which made no reference to Georgian troops using indiscriminate military force against civilians.

70. The armed conflict did not begin in August 2008. The report stated that the conflict on the night of 7 to 8 August was only the culminating point of a long period of increased tensions, provocations and incidents and that acts perpetrated against ethnic Georgians inside and outside of South Ossetia must be considered violations of international humanitarian law and in many cases international human rights law. Furthermore, all South Ossetian military actions directed against the Georgian armed forces after the entry into force of the 12 August 2008 ceasefire agreement were also illegal.

71. **Mr. Rakovskiy** (Russian Federation) said that the text of the report of the Fact-Finding Mission was available on the Internet. Volume I stated that: "On the night of 7 to 8 August 2008, a sustained Georgian artillery attack struck the town of Tskhinvali." (p. 10, para. 2); "The shelling of Tskhinvali by the Georgian

armed forces during the night of 7 to 8 August 2008 marked the beginning of the large-scale armed conflict in Georgia." (p. 11, para. 3); and "There is the question of whether the use of force by Georgia in South Ossetia, beginning with the shelling of Tskhinvali during the night of 7 to 8 August 2008 was justifiable under international law. It was not." (p. 22, para. 19).

72. If those statements were not sufficient, one could consult order No. 2 from the Commander of the 4th Infantry Brigade of the Georgian armed forces, which was reproduced in volume III on pages 618-620. The order began with the statement: "The Task Group shall carry out a combat operation in the Samachablo region (South Ossetia) and defeat the enemy within 72 hours. Restore Georgia's jurisdiction in the region."

73. **Ms. Shanidze** (Georgia) said that, since the beginning of the conflict, the Russian Federation had groundlessly blamed Georgia for killing civilians and provoking the war. The Government-controlled Russian media and Russian officials had referred to obscure human rights organizations and to the General Prosecutor's office as sources of information. According to volume II, chapter 7, of the report of the Fact-Finding Mission, information collected by Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International showed that the Russian Federation had used cluster munitions in populated areas. Georgia had also used such weapons, but there was no evidence that Georgia had deliberately targeted the civilian population. The Georgian forces had used them only against clear military objectives and not in populated areas. According to volume II of the report, "none of the weapons used during the August 2008 conflict could be regarded as unlawful per se under the general principles of international humanitarian law" (p. 338). In conclusion, her delegation's advice to the delegation of the Russian Federation was that, before making any kind of accusations, they should review their own country's history of gross violations of human rights.

74. **Ms. Khudaverdian** (Armenia), referring to the statement made earlier in the meeting by the representative of Azerbaijan, said that the Azerbaijani delegation's decision to use every possible agenda item to unleash a propaganda campaign against Armenia was disappointing. Rather than focus on the unacceptable terminology used however, she wished to point out that the statement contradicted the objectives of the Committee. The international community had witnessed Azerbaijan's policy of State terror against its own citizens when an organized armed mob had killed and tortured innocent Armenians, including children, in Azerbaijani cities with large Armenian communities. Twenty years previously, Azerbaijan had unleashed a full-scale war against the peaceful population of Nagorny Karabakh, forcing tens of thousands of women and children to leave their homes as refugees and internally displaced persons. Azerbaijan should stop such behaviour and concentrate on the conflict resolution process.

75. Armenia strongly believed in the need to achieve a comprehensive solution to the conflict in Nagorny Karabakh, which was not only harmful to confidence in the region but created an atmosphere of hostility and hatred that affected the new generation of Azerbaijani children. It was in everyone's interest to move the peace process forward in order to protect the children and the future generation.

76. **Mr. Garayev** (Azerbaijan) said that the Armenian occupation of Azerbaijani territory clearly had a considerable influence on the humanitarian situation there, especially for the most vulnerable groups. Azerbaijan continued to have one of the highest proportions of refugees and internally displaced persons in the world, and over a third of them were children. The Armenian delegation's unconcealed propaganda for a war of aggression was an obvious attempt to mislead the international community by blatant distortion of facts and an open challenge to any political settlement of the conflict. Instead of contributing to restoring peace, security and stability in the region and putting an end to the conflict, Armenia preferred bellicose rhetoric and escalation. Armenia was clearly far from even thinking of engaging in a sober and effective search for peace.

Statement by the Chairperson

77. **The Chairperson** said that the Committee had thus concluded its consideration of agenda item 65 (a) and (b).

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.